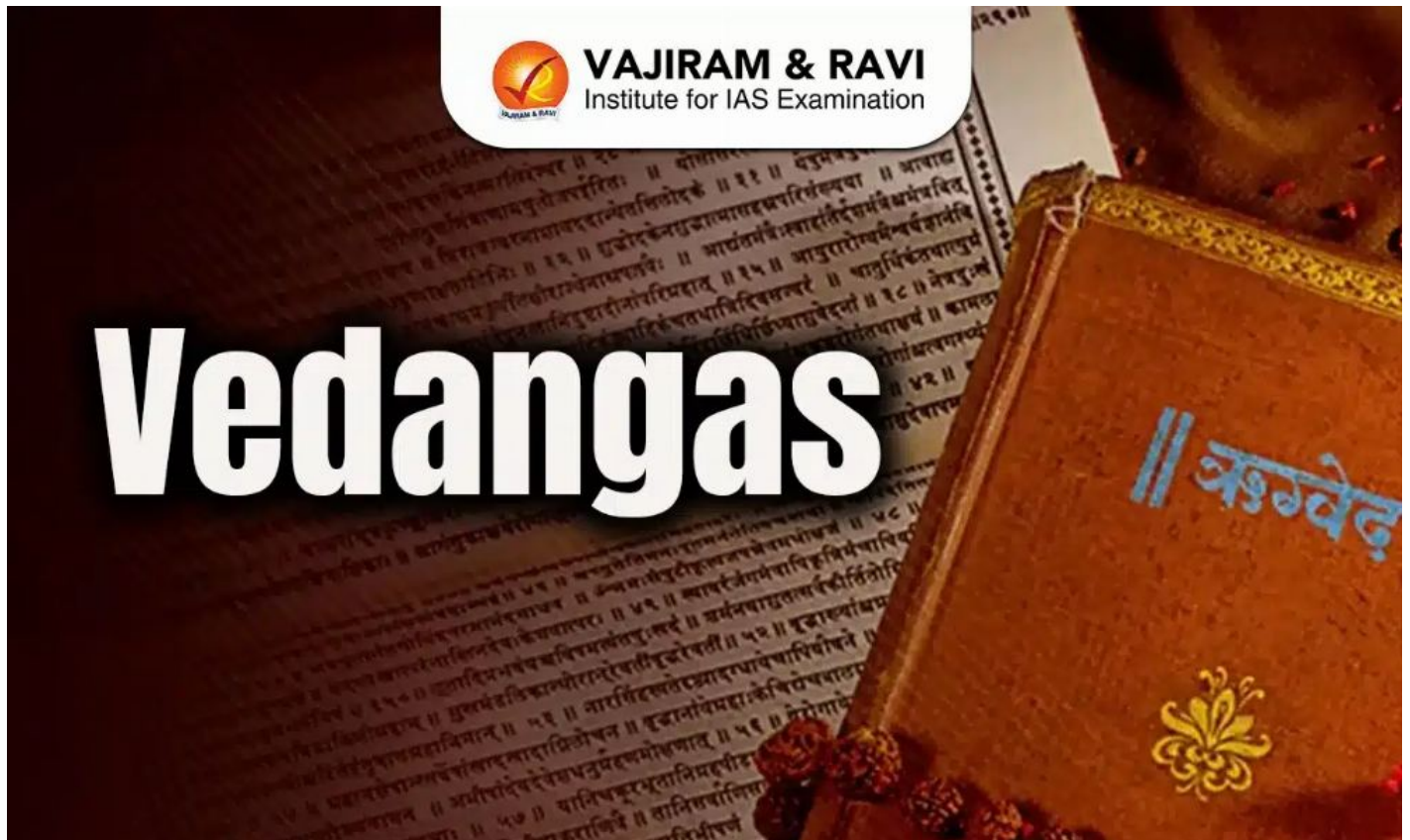


Vedangas, Meaning, List of Six Vedangas, UPSC Notes

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Vedangas, or "limbs of the Vedas" encompass six essential disciplines crucial for studying ancient Indian spiritual texts, the Vedas, and form the foundation of Hinduism and Yoga. These disciplines include Shiksha (phonetics), Chhanda (meter), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Jyotisha (astronomy), and Kalpa (rituals). They assist scholars in preserving, interpreting, and applying Vedic knowledge.

Metaphorically, each **Vedanga** represents a body part of the Veda Purusha, emphasizing a comprehensive approach to Vedic studies, where these disciplines collectively enrich the understanding and practice of Vedic traditions.

Vedangas Meaning

Vedangas, translated as "**limbs of the Vedas**," refer to the six essential disciplines for studying and understanding the ancient Indian spiritual texts, the Vedas. These disciplines formed the foundation of both Hinduism and yoga practices.

- **Paniniya Shiksha** likens the Vedangas to the limbs of a metaphorical "**Veda Purusha**," where Chhandas are his feet, Kalpa his arms, Jyotisha his eyes, Nirukta his ears, Siksha his nose, and Vyakarana his mouth.

Vedangas Types

The Vedangas are six disciplines essential for understanding the Vedas: **Shiksha** (phonetics), **Kalpa** (rituals and ethics), **Vyakarana** (Sanskrit grammar), **Nirukta** (etymology), **Chhanda** (metrical structures), and **Jyotisha** (astronomy for auspicious timings).

Shiksha

Shiksha is the Vedanga focused on **phonetics**, covering the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, accent, stress, melody, and euphonic word combinations during Vedic recitation. It trains students in correct articulation to ensure the perfect chanting of Vedic hymns, maintaining ritual purity and efficacy.

- **Shiksha**, meaning "instruction," provides rules for the **proper pronunciation** of **Samhita** texts. Its importance lies in preserving the power of sound vibrations, considered supreme in Hindu mysticism (**Akshara Brahma**).
- The teachings of Shiksha, Vedic phonetics, are found in the ancient texts called **Pratisakhya**s, each linked to a specific Samhita, guiding the recitation of its hymns.
- Shiksha is considered the most important of the six Angas (organs) of the Veda Purusha. Some significant Pratisakhya include:
 - Rigveda – Pratisakhya of Rigveda.
 - Taittiriya – Pratisakhya of Krishna Yajurveda.
 - Vajasaneyi – Pratisakhya of Shukla Yajurveda.
 - Atharvaveda – Pratisakhya of Atharvaveda.
- Important texts include **Paniniya Shiksha**, **Yaajnavalkya Shiksha**, and **Vasishthi Shiksha**.

Kalpa

Kalpa is the second Vedanga, which refers to **sacred rules** or ordinances, with **sutras** (short statements) acting as **mnemonic tools** to aid the memorization of complex Vedic rituals in the absence of written scripts.

- Kalpa represents the **applied science** of the Vedas, covering sacrificial ceremonies, rites of passage (birth, marriage, death), and personal conduct through various life stages.
- The Kalpa Sutras are divided into **Śrauta Sutras**, which detail Vedic sacrifices and priestly duties, and **Smārta Sutras**, which include **Gṛhya Sutras** on domestic rituals and **Dharma Sutras** on social conduct and law. These texts form the basis for later Dharmashastra traditions.

Vyakarana

Vyakarana, the third Vedanga, focuses on Sanskrit grammar, including word analysis, formation, and sentence structures, offering insights into mastering language. It is called the "**mouth of Veda Purusha**" and is derived from the root "**Kri**" (**to do**).

- Panini's **Ashtadhyayi**, the primary text of **Vyakarana**, superseded earlier works, focusing on **root (Prakriti)** and **suffix (Pratyaya)** analysis.

- Commentaries by **Vararuci** and **Sage Patanjali** further elaborated on Panini's sutras, which form the foundation of Sanskrit grammar.

Nirukta

Nirukta, known as the "**ears of Veda Purusha**," deals with the etymology of words, focusing on their meanings and usage in various contexts, especially within the Vedas.

- This Vedanga explains obscure terms rich in symbolism. **Yaska**, a pre-Panini grammarian, is the foremost authority on **Nirukta**, with his work serving as a commentary on the **Nighantu** (dictionary).
- The Nighantu classifies Vedic words under key ideas, ambiguous terms, and deities from the earth, sky, and heaven realms.

Chhanda

Chhanda, the science of meters in Vedic hymns, analyzes metrical units known as "**pada**," based on syllable counts categorized as **Guru (heavy)** and **Laghu (light)**.

- The sequence of these syllables forms a meter, guiding the context and usage of mantras while also acting as an error-correcting tool. Since Vedic tradition is oral, any discrepancies in text or pronunciation can be rectified through chhanda.
- The **Rig Veda** and **Sama Vedas** are composed in verse, while the Yajur Veda includes both prose and poetry.

Jyotisha

Jyotisha, the final Vedanga, is the "eye" of Veda Purusha, focusing on **astrology** and **astronomy** to determine auspicious times for rituals based on the positions of celestial bodies like the Sun and Moon.

- **Sage Bhrigu** is credited with refining **Jyotisha**, and it later absorbed influences from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Islamic traditions. Though references exist in the Brahmanas and Aranyakas, comprehensive ancient texts are rare.
- Key scholars like **Bhaskaracharya**, **Varahamihira**, and **Aryabhatta** enriched this field around 400 BC.

Vedangas Interconnectedness with Other Disciplines

The Vedangas were vital in establishing Sanskrit as the primary language of ancient India, influencing regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil. Shiksha ensured correct pronunciation, while Vyakarana laid the foundation for modern linguistics.

- They shaped education in Buddhism and Jainism, promoting disciplined recitation.
- The Vedangas also connected with philosophical schools like **Mimamsa** and **Vedanta**, facilitating spiritual exploration.
- Their influence extended to poetry, classical music, and dance forms like **Bharatanatyam**.
- The Kalpa's ethical guidelines continue to resonate in Indian society and modern legal systems.

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